



CITY OF DURHAM | NORTH CAROLINA

Date: May 5, 2015

To: Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager
Through: Keith Chadwell, Deputy City Manager
From: Kevin Dick, Director, Office of Economic and Workforce Development
Subject: Management Agreement for a Public Art Project on Main Street

Executive Summary

This item recommends that the City Council authorize the City Manager to execute a contract with Downtown Durham, Inc. for the management of a public art and lighting project on Main Street.

Recommendation

The Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) recommends that the City Council authorize the City Manager to execute a contract with Downtown Durham, Inc. (DDI) to manage a project to create a series of sculptures and light elements, at locations to be mutually agreed with the City, along Main Street in the Business Improvement District and authorize the use of \$88,000.00 from Downtown Development funding for that purpose.

Background

On November 21, 2011 the City Council approved a Resolution Establishing a Public Art Policy, to establish a public art process for the City of Durham, including the process for the commissioning of works of art by the City of Durham. As stated in that resolution, "...a public art program is important to a city, because it brings social, cultural, educational and economic benefits to the public and visitors to the city..."

Following the Downtown streetscape project, which improved sidewalk appearance and street lighting and which added new trees along Main Street and other streets, and the Downtown Sign and Façade Grant program, which assisted downtown businesses in adding lit signage and other enhancements, the appearance and pedestrian friendliness of Main Street and other streets has been enhanced, to the benefit of downtown retail development. As the trees were added, providing much needed shade in warm weather months, the trees had the unwanted effect of blocking the light from streetlamps and building lighting from reaching the sidewalks after sunset in the months when there is foliage on the trees. The result has been areas of darkness along the sidewalks that reduce the sense of nighttime safety for pedestrians. DDI proposed the use of lights in the trees to offset this problem, but the City's urban forestry staff determined that the light elements in the trees would have negative effects on the health and survival of the trees.

DDI has been studying alternative methods of adding light to the sidewalks in areas of darkness. Working with MHAworks Architecture, DDI has studied the use of artist-designed lighting elements, including light sculptures on the sidewalks and lighted installations on buildings, below the level of tree limbs, to improve the pedestrian experience and sense of safety along Main Street in the Downtown area.

In April, 2015, DDI proposed a project to enhance the Main Street pedestrian experience with a series of original sculptures incorporating lighting elements as well as other artist-designed lighting elements. The Public Art Committee and Cultural Advisory Board reviewed the proposal at their April 15, 2015 meetings. Both bodies voted unanimously to endorse the project in concept. Under the Durham Public Art Policy, DDI would cooperate with the City in managing a process to identify and contract artists and other contractors, including lighting engineers, in developing and implementing designs for works of sculpture, subject to approval by the City, to be installed in locations approved by the City. DDI would work with the Public Art Committee to guarantee an open process to engage the public in the development of location and design recommendations. Final designs and locations would be subject to approval by the City Council or its designee before DDI contracts for the creation and installation of the works. Appropriate City departments would be involved in the design and review process.

Issues and Analysis

A major priority of the City of Durham is increasing and strengthening the economic stability of the City. Studies have demonstrated that arts spending contributes to economic activity and local government revenues, encouraging visitors and associated spending. Public art adds to the appearance of neighborhoods and promotes a sense of place. The OEWD staff endorses the proposed project, which would serve to promote the continued revitalization and vitality of downtown Durham and provide additional lighting elements to the sidewalks and pedestrian experience in the Downtown District. The encouragement of public art is a stated goal of the Downtown Master Plan, Citywide Strategic Plan and Durham Comprehensive Plan. It is hoped that the project will serve as a model for future similar projects in other locations in the City and that it can be used to encourage private property owners to provide support for those projects.

In addition to funds provided by the City, DDI would contribute the \$12,588.00 remaining from its City-funded Downtown Sign Grant program, which has been completed. The funds remaining resulted from Sign Grant projects completed under budget or cancelled by the grant recipients. Total project costs would be \$100,588.00 including project management, design services, fabrication and installation, as well as a set-aside of up to \$10,000.00 to be used by DDI for future maintenance, including light element replacement and repairs as needed. On an annual basis, DDI will be required to report on the use of the maintenance fund.

Alternatives

The City Council may reject the recommendation to accept ownership of the work. Not approving the acceptance would eliminate the opportunity for the City to enhance the pedestrian experience along Main Street.

Financial Impact

Funding would be provided from funds remaining in the Fiscal Year 2015 Downtown Development budget allocation.

SDBE

This contract was not reviewed by the Department of Equal Opportunity/Equity Assurance for compliance with the Ordinance to Promote Equal Opportunities in City Contracting.

Attachments

Contract for Management of a Downtown Public Art and Lighting Project on Main Street